

PERSONAL NARRATIVES
OF EVENTS IN THE
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The Investment of Fort Pulaski.

BY

ALONZO WILLIAMS.

[Late Second Lieutenant, Third Rhode Island Heavy Artillery.]

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THE INVESTMENT OF FORT PULASKI.

AFTER the first campaign in 1861, which terminated so disastrously at Manassas, the army in Virginia lay comparatively inactive until the spring of 1862. During this long interval, however, several important expeditions were set on foot in the west and in the farther south. One of the latter was organized very early in the fall of 1861, and set sail from Hampton Roads October twenty-ninth, consisting of fifty keels under Commodore Dupont, and fifteen thousand troops under General T W Sherman. After a stormy passage, during which the fleet was dissipated to the winds of heaven and four steamers were lost in a hurricane off Cape Hatteras, the scattered and battered armada began to re-collect and rendezvoused off Port Royal, South Carolina. Forts Walker and Beauregard were reduced, a footing gained on the sea islands and the enemy forced back to the main-land.

The army and navy deployed at once in every direction by land and sea and commenced operations against the line of the enemy, which extended some two hundred miles from Charleston, South Carolina, across Georgia to Jacksonville on the St. John's River in Florida, and was commanded at this time by no less a personage than General Robert E. Lee. This line was the principal theatre of action of the Third Rhode Island Heavy Artillery, some portion of which was actively engaged at every salient point of this stubbornly defended line during the next four years, participating in every engagement in siege and field, and serving as infantry, as heavy artillery, as light artillery, as horse artillery. Company A, of which the narrator had the honor of being a member during the entire four years, was in turn metamorphosed into each of the species of the genus soldier above named; and served, moreover, for several months in the navy, until one pleasant morning in the spring of '63 all its members were raised to the mast-head by the explosion of a rebel shell in the magazine, and found, when they came down, that the steamer also had been razed to the water's edge.

The first siege our regiment was called upon to undertake was that of Fort Pulaski, situated at the entrance to the Savannah River, and to this I have the pleasure of inviting your attention this evening. Our esteemed fellow-citizen, General Horatio Rogers, who played such a distinguished and honorable part in the breaching batteries on Tybee Island, has in preparation an account of the bombardment and capture of the fort; consequently I shall limit this paper definitely to the investment, every phase of which, from the inception to the crowning consummation, came under the observation of the narrator; and of this I hope to give details which have not as yet been put upon record. I cannot well suppress the apprehension, however, lest the details I shall give may sound to you like the calm and monotonous passages from an Odyssey in comparison with the soul-stirring episodes of an Iliad, with the recital of which these halls are accustomed to be filled, and I crave at the outset your most patient indulgence.

FORTIFIED LINE OF THE ENEMY.

Port Royal was the centre of activity. In our front the enemy had constructed a formidable stra-

tegic line, its right resting on Fort McAllister on the Ogechee River, sixteen miles south of Savannah, passing through Fort Beaulieu on Vernon River and numerous strong batteries on the intervening islands to Forts Thunderbolt, Bonadventure and Clausten's Bluff on St. Augustine Creek, to Forts Jackson, Lee, Tatnall and Lawton on the Savannah immediately in front of the city, and thence on to the left of the line, resting on Charleston harbor, eighty miles to the north. The advanced posts of this line were at Pulaski, New River Bridge, Bluffton, Port Royal Ferry, and on the extreme left, Morris Island and Sumter. At all these points in turn attacks were made upon this line, but without avail, as the enemy had large forces encamped along the Charleston and Savannah railroad which could be readily concentrated upon any threatened point. From a careful study of the official reports — Union and Confederate — it is fair, however, to presume that a concentrated and vigorous attack might have broken this line, cut the communications, taken Savannah, and possibly Charleston in reverse, and thus very early in the war have opened an avenue to the

vitals of the Confederacy. This *was* the plan of General Sherman and just what General Lee feared he would attempt. The failure was due principally to the peremptory refusal of the newly-elected chief of all the armies to send the necessary reinforcements.

Compelled to give up his original plan, General Sherman decided to force the entrance to the Savannah by siege. His chief engineer, General Gilmore, made a reconnoissance and reported that the reduction of the fort was practicable from Tybee Island. The armament for the breaching batteries, however, did not arrive from the north until after an interval of fifteen weeks; yet expeditions were set on foot immediately for the investment of the fort.

The Savannah River runs to the southeast and its *débouchure* at Tybee Roads is about twelve miles from the city. It is skirted by low marsh islands, intersected by innumerable large and small tortuous bayous and creeks. On the Carolina side lies a vast marsh called Hog Island, below Mud River, Jones Island, across Wright River, Turtle Island, beyond New River in the background Daufuskie Island.

In the stream lie Elba, Bird, Long and Cockspur Islands. The latter is the site of Fort Pulaski. On the Georgia side lie McQueens, Decent, Little Tybee, and projecting far out beyond the northern lip of the river's mouth Big Tybee, its seaward face a low, sandy promontory, against which the Atlantic incessantly breaks.

The fort is of brick, its walls, seven and one-half feet thick, rising twenty-five feet above high water. Its form is that of a rectilinear pentagon, whose vertex is to the open sea. The up-river face, or gorge, is covered by a demilune of earth in bold relief. The main work is surrounded by a ditch forty-eight feet wide, and the two faces of the demilune were protected by a ditch thirty-two feet wide. The only communication with the exterior, up to the time our James Rifles opened a better one, was through the gorge over a drawbridge into the demilune and then through the left face of the demilune over the demilune ditch by another drawbridge. The fort is casemated on all sides and mounts one tier of guns *en embrasure* and one *en barbette*, a full armament being one hundred and forty, though

only forty-eight were in battery at the time of the bombardment; twenty of which bore on Tybee, viz. :

Five 10-inch columbiads.

Five 8-inch columbiads.

Four 32-pounders.

One 24-pounder Blakely

Two 12-inch seacoast mortars.

Three 10-inch seacoast mortars.

The position is a very strong one and commands both channels of the river. Well might its commandant, Colonel Olmstead, feel secure in such a stronghold against any batteries that could be planted in the bottomless marshes by which he was encompassed.

FIRST RECONNOISSANCE.

The expeditions for the investment were made on the north via Calibogue Sound, Cooper, New, Wright and Mud Rivers, planting batteries in the marshes on the north bank and in the middle of the Savannah.

A reconnoissance was made by Lieutenant Wilson, of the United States Topographical Engineers, to spy out the land. We set out December twenty-fourth, forty men from Company A under Lieutenant Fry, and forty men from Company E under Captain Bailey, marched across Hilton Head to Saybrook, entered four large surf-boats and pulled out through Skull Creek into Calibogue Sound. At night we ascended Cooper River and turning into Ramshorn Creek, which connects with New River, we landed about nine o'clock on Pine Island. Here in a small cabin a council of war was held, and each squad was instructed in the perilous duties it *might* be called upon to perform. I may read the orders given to my sergeant, Charles H. Williams, in the execution of which—*execution* is here just the word—his squad was to furnish the background to the claret-colored scene he was about to paint and to give bold relief to the stalwart form of its sergeant in the foreground. A lonely picket was supposed to be stationed at a certain outpost *by* which we *must* pass. The poor picket was not to blame. But it is the inexorable law of life: the individual must

ever be sacrificed to the advance of the race. Our sergeant was to land and approach the object of our compassion. When arrested by : "*Who goes there?*" he was to answer : "*Friend with the countersign,*", [What a fib ! but, lying like swearing, is at times a military necessity,] and when invited to "*Advance, friend, and give the countersign.*" he was to approach as close as permitted and then, leaning forward as if to whisper the password, then — shall I tell it? — I will read the very words of the order : "*Strike down your man!*" The squad was to be near enough to see that the picket interposed no objection to the execution — of the order. A nice way this to spend Christmas eve. Each of our sergeants was in turn summoned into that little shanty and assigned some similar duty, and we remember how cheerful each looked as he came out.

As we were now inside the enemy's lines, oars were muffled, and having been enjoined to speak only in whispers, we pushed on in the direction of Savannah. We passed through one noted thoroughfare called : "*Pull-and-Be-Damned-Creek.*" That was the euphonious title which the "contrabands,"

who are of rather an emotional religious-temperament, gave to the harmless waterway. If I remember rightly, as we struggled against its swift tide that night, several of my non-religious comrades expressed to each other in pretty stout whispers their opinion that the sluice was none too well named, and even volunteered a few semi-religious epithets as harmonious additions to the sentence-tious appellation. Our negro boatmen and guides lost the way or became frightened, so we turned back and landed on Daufuskie toward morning, and after throwing out pickets, snatched a few hours sleep in a deserted house.

Lieutenant Wilson now set out with Captain Bailey and a boat's crew to get the bearings in the day time, leaving the rest of us to cover their rear, and to meet them after dark on Pine Island. On their return at evening they were intercepted by pickets stationed near Bloody Point, on the very island where we had spent the day. They rowed boldly for the shore, and after a sharp encounter drove them in.

Nor had the party left on Daufuskie been inactive.

They too had met the enemy and gloriously conquered. If you will call upon my *Fidus Achates*, comrade George M. Turner, he will give you the details of the charge which he so gallantly led, and will tell you how the new sabre-bayonets of Company A received their first stain of hostile blood. As the result of the skirmish — for it hardly rose to the dignity of an engagement — the party sat down to a Christmas dinner of roast beef, sweet potatoes and confiscated chicken.

Soon after our re-union on Pine Island an alarm was given by the enemy and rockets sent up all along the line for miles. You must remember we were wholly within their lines, as they occupied the islands behind us. As the enemy were now on the alert, it was decided that only one boat should make the final and farthest venture that night. We started about ten p. m., Lieutenant Wilson, Captain Bailey, ten picked men and eight negro-boatmen. We worked our way stealthily up Wright River, through Mud River into the Savannah, Lieutenant Wilson making careful observations all the while, and each man grasping firmly his trusty rifle, his finger upon

the trigger, straining eager eyes into the darkness, ready to anticipate any over-hasty picket. We ascended thus the Savannah to within three miles of the city, and would probably have landed in Fort Jackson had we not come unexpectedly upon one of Commodore Tatnall's fleet, the giant gunboat "Samson." We passed within twenty yards of it and could see the sentry pacing upon the deck. As it was getting early and the evidences of the enemy getting more and more numerous, indicated by the firing all about us, we concluded to turn back; and after a sharp exchange of compliments with the pickets along the streams, we arrived off the camp on Daufuskie, about ten o'clock in the morning, laden with much important information and several suitings of very rich mud.

To this camp, Lieutenant Fry and his men had returned about eleven o'clock the night before, stationed outposts, hung the windows of the old house with rubber blankets, built a fire and turned in with toes to the hearth. About one o'clock the firing, which had been heard at intervals, became more general and quite near. The sergeant of the guard,

Williams, was summoned without intermission from point to point. One picket after another claimed that he had seen men in the woods, and some that they had been fired upon. The guard was doubled, and later trebled, and all the men were aroused. Positive orders had been left not to fire unless attacked, as it might cut off the return of our party. Thus the men sat dosing, with equipments on and rifles across their knees until daylight, when they distinctly heard the *réveille* and platoon firing in the enemy's camp. Before our party returned they had become alarmed, had embarked in hot haste and were on the point of departure when we put in an appearance several hours behind the time agreed upon.

As the objects of the reconnoissance had been attained, we turned our prows toward Hilton Head, where we arrived at evening of the third day. Soundings had been made of the streams leading to the Savannah by which gunboats might approach to protect us while erecting batteries. It was developed, however, that New and Wright Rivers were connected by a narrow but deep artificial

channel, called Wall's Cut, in the centre of which a large schooner had been sunk and fixed in position by heavy piles. Lieutenant Wilson reported these facts at headquarters, but his report as to the practicability of erecting batteries on those mud marshes was that it was absolutely impossible.

This expedition, penetrating so far into the enemy's lines and remaining there so long, was regarded as a feat of unusual daring. The Comte de Paris in his excellent history alludes to the discovery of the inland passage "*by a bold explorer.*" Lieutenant Fry wrote of Company A: "I never saw cooler men. The greatest trouble was they wanted to fight, but that was not our object." We were welcomed as heroes on our return, as it was rumored that we had all been cut off and that Captain Bailey had been killed. The genial captain still lives, however, though he has passed through many a "*Pull-and-be-Damned-Creek*" since Christmas eve, 1861.

REMOVAL OF THE SCHOONER.

A secret expedition was sent January eighth to remove the schooner from Wall's Cut, consisting of

Company I, First New York Engineers, Captain Walker, twenty picked men from the same regiment, and sixteen men from Company G, Third Rhode Island Heavy Artillery, Sergeant Hudson, all commanded by Major O. T. Beard, Forty-eighth New York. Surf-boats with tools were towed by the steamer Mayflower as far as prudent, a landing made on Daufuskie, the boats with the tools rowed by night around to the Dunn plantation near Bloody Point, where the men, who marched across the island, arrived at midnight, and in silence the stores were landed.

The next day an advanced line of pickets was sent out in boats, and preparations made by the engineers to commence work at nightfall. Steamers were constantly passing up and down the Savannah so near that men could be seen walking upon their decks, and the stars could be counted on the flag at Pulaski. That night the engineers succeeded in sawing off, with peculiar saws of their own invention, five of the piles at the very bottom of the deep channel, and in the morning returned with the piles in tow. Thus by incessant labor, night and

day, for nearly a week, they succeeded in removing all the piles and swung the schooner around and secured it to the side of the Cut.

One night as the details were approaching the Cut, a shot from that direction threw them into consternation. A moment later two shots were heard in their rear; then one from Fort Jackson, which was answered from the city "What does this mean? Are we discovered?" asked Major Beard, as he called Captain Walker along side. The men were unarmed and apparently surrounded, but Major Beard was there, and after consultation it was decided to go ahead. Permission was kindly given to any who did not wish to accompany them to get out. Did you ever know a man brave enough to back out under such circumstances? How situations like this taught us early in youth that fear is of very little real value in the practical affairs of life. Often when perils seem to gather about us there is no real danger of losing our life unless we first lose our heads. The firing was started by the neglect of Lieutenant Wilson to answer promptly the challenge of a picket, and there was no let up until the

circuit was completed, for when one picket has fired, every wavering reed becomes a man to every other picket ; in the palpitation of his own heart he hears the tramp of the approaching foe ; and the goblins of his own past deeds fill the air with frightful spectres. Have you ever been a lonely picket, my friend ?

Early one morning, it was SUNDAY, a small boat was discovered coming up Mud River from the Savannah. Our picket boat lay in hiding until it had passed, and thus cut it off and captured it. The party proved to be duck hunters from the city. When informed that they were prisoners, they retorted : “ We have a pass from General Drayton.” “ All right,” replied the amiable and facetious lieutenant, “ *pass* into my boat.” When will men learn not to go down the river duck hunting on Sunday ? The prisoners were much surprised to learn that the obstructions were nearly removed from the Cut, and told Major Beard what he already knew, that if it were known at Pulaski, they “ would be blown to, to —— ; the Revised Version

spells it *sheol*, with a downward pitch on the last syllable.

When we remember that this obstruction was so far within the lines of the enemy that it was left unguarded on the supposition that we would not have the temerity to approach it, nor the ingenuity to remove it unseen, especially as steamers were passing daily in the Savannah, we may gain some idea of the delicacy and difficulty of these operations. The boys of the old "Third" have since then removed many *schooners* from their progress in life, but none that taxed more their ingenuity and powers of endurance than the one which they sawed out in Wall's Cut, January, 1862.

JOINT EXPEDITION OF ARMY AND NAVY.

A joint expedition of land and naval forces was now at once prepared. We left Port Royal January twenty-sixth, the Forty-eighth New York, Sixth Connecticut, parts of the Eighth Maine and First New York Engineers, and of our regiment, Company E, Company G, and twenty-five picked men from Company A, all commanded by General

Viele; and accompanied by gunboats under Commander John Rodgers. The guns and ordnance stores were towed on flats by the steamer Mayflower :

Four 30-pounder Parrott rifles.

Three 20-pounder Parrott rifles.

Two 8-inch siege howitzers.

One 24-pounder field howitzer.

Each flat carried equipments and ten rounds of ammunition for each gun. A schooner followed, containing, besides intrenching tools and ammunition :

Five 24-pounder field howitzers.

Three 24-pounder James rifles.

One 8-inch siege mortar.

One 10-inch siege mortar.

General Gillmore accompanied the expedition, and to his zeal and indomitable perseverance is chiefly due the success of the work accomplished on the upper Savannah, as well as that on Tybee, whither he was summoned a month later.

We rendezvoused on Daufuskie, where we found a part of the Seventh Connecticut guarding Wall's Cut. After a reconnoissance it was decided to erect a battery at Venus Point on Jones Island by towing the armament through Mud River and down the Savannah under protection of the gunboats; but it was deemed important to construct first a causeway over the marsh from Mud River, so that, in case of an attack in force, our infantry supports might be readily brought up from Daufuskie, four miles distant, the nearest point where reserves could be located with any certainty of finding them above the surface when wanted.

The first week was spent in cutting poles for the causeway, and in filling sandbags. Ten thousand poles nine feet long and from five to six inches in diameter were cut and brought a mile or more on the shoulders of the men. Several more days were spent in transporting this material to a temporary wharf in Mud River, and in constructing a wheelbarrow road of plank across to Venus Point, over which several hundred sandbags and a quantity of material were carried by the men, mostly at night.

Our men assisted in these various tasks, but our particular duty was to guard the flats. Lieutenant Porter, the Chief Ordnance Officer, said in his report: "Their skill and energy alone saved the flats during the long time they were exposed to rough waters, winds and tides." Those alone can fully comprehend the significance of these words, who passed those winter nights upon them, exposed to the fury of the storms, drifting in the swift running creeks, or stranded on the marshes, at the risk of losing the guns, which were more worth than their life.

The narrator was a member of a reconnoitering party sent out into and across the Savannah to find and cut the land and submarine telegraph wires between the city and fort. About a mile of the wire, running, as it were, under the very keels of their gunboats and between the legs of their pickets, was cut and carried off, a piece of which I hold in my hand.

Many interesting incidents occurred during our stay on Daufuskie, had we time to recite them. Here for the first time were we afforded an oppor-

tunity to develop that predatory faculty innate in every genuine Yankee soldier. If there was anything savory on that fertile island which the "Third Rhode Island" did not first enjoy, it is not recorded that any other regiment discovered it.

An incident, or rather accident, that befel one of Company E, Sergeant Keene, later Lieutenant in Company B, who has long since joined the boys on the other side of the river, we can never forget. Commander Rodgers had engaged five rebel gunboats, which were passing down the Savannah with barges in tow for the fort, and every one was on tiptoe to get a good view of the engagement. Sergeant Keene had been a sailor, and is led at once by his seafaring instinct to "shin" up one of the tall slender pines grown for that purpose. We watch him with envy as he climbs up, up, ten feet; up, up still, now twenty feet above our highest aspirations; he reaches at last a limb, and good seaman as he is, nimbly swings himself over it, seats himself in such a way as to show that the Creator made no mistake when he bifurcated man, and then prepares to drink in the enchanting pano-

rama. What envious creatures we are, forgetting, alas! the great truth in life's economy, to wit: the higher up a man gets, the more difficult it becomes to maintain his equilibrium. Hark! Something snaps and something drops. Envy is changed to pity, and a score of comrades hasten to raise a fallen brother. Is he dead? Bounteous Nature has provided a soft cushion, a sort of life-preserver for just such emergencies, if one but knows how to avail himself of it. Sergeant Keene had not been to sea in vain. Drawing the correct mathematical conclusion that the least surface of contact is furnished by two colliding spheres, he makes a few revolutions that would have done credit to an expert tumbler over elephants, then assumes the attitude he was looking for, and lands on that part of his rounded development where the least harm could result. That was the moment his picture should have been taken. The laugh that arose has hardly subsided to this day. Surely men are creatures of changing emotions.

One day a violent storm swept over the island, accompanied by terrific thunder, following in the

wake of wicked flashes of lightning. Sergeant Williams seeing a guard near his tent carrying his musket at shoulder with fixed bayonet, shouted: "Stick that d-d- dangerous bayonet in the ground!" Good soldier as he was, he halted on his beat, faced outward and ordered arms. The next instant he lay prostrate beside his musket — *dead!* He was laid in an "A" tent on the shore and Sergeant Williams was ordered to furnish a man to spend the night with the body. I heard him say that he wanted "a man who *had sand in him*" — that was one of his classical expressions, — and so he detailed one bearing the same name as himself, and there were but two of that distinguished Rhode Island name in the detachment. That body-guard has never forgotten the long cheerless hours of that night, and often has he prayed to all the Stygian gods that they will yet grant him an opportunity to reciprocate the kindness shown him at that time by his *sandy* namesake.

Taken all and all our life on Daufuskie was not an unpleasant one, a fact due in no small degree to the beauty of the island itself. The coast from

Charleston to Savannah is fringed with low, rich islands, which on the map has the appearance of elegant lace on a lady's mantle. Amongst these islands and the marshes which separate them from the main land, run innumerable rivers and deep, narrow creeks and bayous, into which the tides bring the warmth and life of the Gulf Stream. The islands have a rich, vegetable substratum, and are blanketed by the fine sands of the ocean's margin. These are the famous Sea Islands, and here grows in wild luxuriance the Sea Island cotton, with its long silky fibre. Here in stately majesty tower to the bending blue sky the unctuous southern pine, the proud, pompion-shaped palmetto, the delicately slender cypress, the fragrant magnolia; and here the majestic live-oak rears its graceful triumphal arches and hangs them with the gray, clinging drapery of the soft southern moss. Here abound shrubs and vines and flowers even in mid-winter, the lovely jasmine, the *gelsinium sempervirens*, clothing its climbing tendrils with yellow flowers and spreading fragrance and beauty on all around; as also the passion-flower, an inspiration

and assurance of our own success, preaching by cruciform petals and medicinal virtues the lesson of triumph through suffering.

Of all these charming islands none is more beautiful, fertile and luxuriant than the quiet isle of Daufuskie. Looking out through dense forests over the placid waters of Calibogue Sound ; and toward the rising sun to the white caps of old ocean lashing itself to fury upon the sand-bars that lie upon the far horizon ; and southward over the broad Savannah and its myriad isles, she seems to sit a queen of veritable eastern luxury and indolence among the many low marshes and flat rice fields that lie between her and the main land. Large mansions surrounded by ample buildings and rich gardens, added the life and grace of civilization to the native and semi-tropical wildness of this charming Sea Island. No one, surely, of the "Third Rhode Island" who passed the days from January 26 to February 11, 1862, on this island, can easily recall a sunnier spot in that, at once, dark and bright era of our life. Even now as I dwell upon it, recollection seems to grow clearer, memory sees farther

back into the past, a holy calm encompasses those stormy years, and fain would I linger still within the precincts of the encircling charm and leave to others the recitals of the dangers and sufferings now so soon to follow.

THE PLANTING OF BATTERY VULCAN.

All was now ripe for planting the battery on Jones Island, and the contrast between our life of comparative comfort on Daufuskie and the arduous duties awaiting us call vividly to mind the statement of Cæsar in his commentaries on the Gallic War: that the gods are accustomed to grant to men favorable fortunes for a while that they may suffer the more grievously from a violent change of circumstances. It was decided that the gunboats should attempt the Mud River passage on the night of February ninth on the tide, and the Mayflower should follow immediately behind with the flats in tow. At nightfall all is in readiness for the perilous passage. The signal is given and the Mayflower turns on steam. The elements, however, were averse, if not in league with the enemy. The

bottom of the heavens fell out ; the winds howled and spirits of terror and dismay were abroad ; the muddy rivers boiled as a vast maelstrom ; the mad tides rushed in from every direction, covering the islands like a second deluge ; an impenetrable darkness spread itself over the scene ; yet we struggled against Fate with a determination that would not yield till broken. What strength of character and iron wills that war developed ! But our efforts were in vain and toward morning we cast anchor, and at daybreak found ourselves near the spot whence we started.

The gunboats now seemed reluctant to move. As Mud River was only about eight feet deep at flood and one and one-half at low tide, there was some doubt whether they could get back, should Tatnall prove more than a match in the Savannah. As the fort prevented them from going down the river, they might be themselves bottled and exposed to all the torpedoes and fire rafts from above. It would be useless for us to attempt the Savannah River passage without the gunboats. But General Gillmore was not a man to be frustrated in his

designs. He decided to haul the guns over the marsh to Venus Point, nearly a mile, a task any rational man would pronounce impossible. Had not General Lee already reported to Richmond that the erection of a battery on these islands was impossible? But General Gillmore left his dictionary at home and had evidently forgotten the definition of that word.

Let me describe to you Jones Island and you may judge of the feasibility of the undertaking. Like the adjacent islands it is covered with reeds and tall grass, and flooded at high tide. It is soft unctuous mud, free from sand and of the elasticity of gelatine. A pole can be forced into it ten or twelve feet with ease, and the resistance diminishes with increase of penetration. Even in the most elevated parts the crust is but four or five inches in depth, and the sub-stratum is a semi-fluid mud, which is agitated like jelly by the movement of bodies over it. A person is partially sustained by the roots of the grass and sinks only a few inches, but when this top gives way, he goes down suddenly several feet and unless rescued at once is in imminent peril.

Over this treacherous surface the rash general proposed to transport guns of several tons weight ; impossible ! impossible ! so said wise men, so said the rebels, so said the Fates. General Gillmore said : we'll try, and his features were set. That night four flats were towed by row-boats up against the tide through Wall's Cut into Mud River, between eight and ten P. M., and when all the guns and ammunition had been landed, an immense task alone, the men were set to hauling the pieces over the marsh. Most of them had been on continuous duty up to their waist in water for twenty-four hours and from sheer exhaustion were unfit for the arduous work, hence the pieces were covered with reeds and grass to prevent discovery and the men withdrew. That same night the engineers commenced the magazine and platforms on Venus Point. The floor of the magazine rested on sand-bags which raised it twenty inches, and the platforms, nine by seventeen feet, were raised six inches with sand brought up from Daufuskie and carried over in bags on the shoulders of the men. They also concealed their work and withdrew just before daybreak.

The next night the work was resumed, and the narrator can never forget that he was there. The task was of the most extraordinary labor, and exhausting to a degree beyond one's power to describe. Let me attempt to tell you how it was done. The pieces, limbered up, were moved on runways of planks laid end to end, each fifteen feet long, one foot wide and three inches thick. Each squad had one pair of extra planks which were placed in front and then the pieces drawn forward with strong drag ropes, and suppressed groans, until the rear planks were cleared and then those were carried to the front and the operation repeated, a slow and tiresome process. The planks soon became smeared with the slimy mud and difficult to handle, so that ropes had to be attached by which they were dragged through the mire. We sank to our knees and often to our waists, and encased our feet in sand-bags tied below the knee, and these served as a sort of pontoon, but after one had been under a few times, these became too heavy to drag and were discarded. Many vexatious delays and much exhausting labor was occasioned by the slipping of

the gun-carriages from the runways. They would sink at once to the axle, even deeper, and only by the most expeditious use of skids and great exertions were they kept from sinking to the bottom, while powerful levers had to be devised and much time and united effort expended to raise them to the surface again. When the wheels struck the poles on which the planks were laid, the other end of the pole would fly up, striking the men in body or face and land them in the mud, if not seriously cripple them. Add now to these Herculean efforts the dispiriting discomforts attendant upon a drenching winter storm, remembering what these same men had been called upon to undergo during the three preceding nights and intervening days spent in bringing up material from Daufuskie, and you may possibly form a faint conception of what those boys, then fresh from the schools and shops and farms and comfortable homes of New England, had to suffer on Jones Island that bitter night in February.

Need I tell you that toward morning they began to give out, and neither encouragements nor threats nor maltreatment availed. Many fell in the mud

and refused to rise, in most cases could not. As for myself, my very final effort at last was spent. The Fates, however, were not wholly unpropitious. At that instant there was for some reason a momentary halt. The wheel of our gun-carriage had scarcely ceased turning, when I saw my stalwart sergeant and namesake embracing its tire lovingly with folded arms, holding on for dear life, but fast asleep standing. I needed no farther incentive. I let go the will, my hamstrings relaxed and I dropped. Never did softer or more welcome couch receive the weary form of a king. I slept. I dreamed. Even now I recall the bliss experienced as the mud seemed to open and let me down, down, down to — well, any place were heaven to the sheol we were in. Those were precious moments, but, alas, they were fleeting, as all the purest joys of life. Whether it was a prod from a bayonet or a kick from my sergeant's stern foot, I was rudely aroused and summoned to the endless and hopeless task. I looked to my namesake for compassion, but he now towered up against the midnight sky forbidding as a Jove, looking as austere and inno-

cent as if he had never himself lapsed from duty. You who know my esteemed comrade only as a Paris, little realize what he is when a Mars. We must not linger to depict farther the details of this weary night. At two A. M. the first piece was at Venus Point and the last before nine o'clock, and by noon six guns were in battery ready for business :

Three 30-pounder Parrott rifles.

Two 20-pounder Parrott rifles.

One 8-inch siege howitzer.

The southerners had shown their knowledge of classical antiquity by naming this small elevation Venus Point, whether because it rose from the waves of the sea, or whether because so slightly clad, or because its fair surface was so treacherous, does not appear. The Yankees, not to be outdone in display of academic lore, recalling the special favors shown to the grim forger of Jove's thunderbolts by that fair goddess to whom all the gods, as well as degenerate man, are ever ready to pay

homage, solemnly christened this, the first offspring of their labors, "Battery Vulcan."

The day was spent in preparing for action. As night approached we began to look about for hard, not soft, places in which to sleep, being excluded from the platforms, as they could barely sustain the weight of the guns. Foresight had led the narrator to place his effects upon the cross-bar of a limber standing behind the gun in the mud, and thus he claimed by pre-emption this bar and the adjoining pole as his headquarters, and on that slender tongue he balanced himself and slept in happy equilibrium of body and spirit dreaming of the battle to come on the morrow.

In the morning the steamer *Ida* came down on her trip to Pulaski, all unconscious of the hidden danger. She was thrown into consternation by the storm of shot and shell that unexpectedly burst upon her, but escaped unharmed, as all our guns, except one, recoiled off the platforms. Having now disclosed our position, Tatnall might appear at any moment, and our guns were sinking in the mud. Ignorant of our plight the attack was delayed.

Meantime strenuous exertions were made to remedy our mistakes, and this preliminary experience, disclosing as it did our defects, saved Battery Vulcan from being knocked off Venus Point, and this narrative from being abruptly curtailed.

When Tatnall appeared the next day with four gunboats, we were ready for him, and after a warm engagement of an hour he was glad to have his disabled flagship towed out of action. This engagement was fought by us against large odds in number of guns, without any cover by parapet, and that, too, on unfinished platforms. General Sherman sent his felicitation as follows :

“The commanding general requests that you will thank the officers and men of the Third Rhode Island Artillery for the admirable conduct displayed during the recent engagement with the rebel gunboats, having every confidence they will always distinguish themselves ; and expresses his conviction that when opportunity offers every other company of the regiment will emulate the conduct of Companies E and G and the detachment of Company A.”

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THE PLANTING OF BATTERY HAMILTON.

It was now decided to plant a battery in the middle of the river on the upper end of Bird Island, directly opposite Venus Point, in order to close the south channel and St. Augustine Creek. Company E and the detachment of Company A were selected to man the guns, and the flats with the armament and material were brought from Daufuskie into Mud River February twentieth. About midnight we reached the mouth of the river, and on the change of the tide at one A. M. pulled out into the Savannah, under the very noses of the rebel gunboats. It was a perilous passage. The solemn injunction that no one should speak was superfluous. We held our breath, our hearts stopped beating, our hair stood on end :

“Obstupui, steteruntque comae et vox faucibus haesit;”

nothing moved but the even swing of our muffled oars, and uncertainty which beat its thousand-fold dark pinions about our anxious heads. Major Beard and Captain Hamilton led in a small boat, and by a

preconcerted system of signals indicated the proper direction to Captain Bailey, Sergeant Williams and the other flats. As the tide was running strong and the night exceedingly dark, we found it difficult to keep our course, but succeeded about two A. M. in reaching the point designated, and commenced at once to construct the platforms and magazine and to land the armament. Such silence was preserved that the enemy was not aware of the movement till daylight, when it was too late to attack us with impunity. At daybreak an eight-inch howitzer was in position, and by three P. M. we had in battery six pieces :

Three 24-pounder James rifles.

One 30-pounder Parrott rifle.

One 20-pounder Parrott rifle.

One 8-inch howitzer.

Thus all communication by the Savannah, between the city and the fort, was effectually closed on the twenty-first day of February, and on the same day the first vessel with ordnance from the North for the siege batteries on Tybee Island arrived off the

harbor. This side was blockaded, and hence the fort invested on this side first. Early in December the Forty-sixth New York, under Colonel Rosa, had been secretly landed, as a precautionary measure, on Tybee, and there they had lain all this while, as it were *sub rosa*. Two companies of this regiment were sent the next day to occupy Decent Island, in order to close Lazeretto Creek, and thus was completed on February twenty-second the absolute investment of Fort Pulaski. The erection of the breaching batteries on Tybee, the bombardment and capture of the fort, and the important, nay leading rôle played therein by the officers and men of the Third Rhode Island I leave to another and abler pen.

LIFE ON BIRD ISLAND.

Our life, or rather vegetation, of nearly two months on Bird Island with its attendant privations and sufferings and frequent contests with the fleet, was very trying. These vicissitudes must be left untold. I will add one or two characteristic incidents and from these you may judge of them all.

The first night I well remember. Exhausted by the unceasing labors night and day for two weeks, especially the exertions of the previous night, and the unremitting toil of the day, we began to long for darkness and rest. But where could we lie down? The platforms were sinking and we were forbidden to stand on them. We were ever ready to die standing, but to sleep standing required more nerve than any of us possessed, though our sergeant had been seen to perform that feat. To add to our discomforts a rain came on with the darkness. Each man was left to care for himself. The narrator went out into the marsh and broke a bundle of reeds and grass and made a bed on the spot, and weaving together the tops of some of the tallest reeds and spreading them apart he formed a shelter in the shape of an A tent, under which he crawled and was soon dreaming like a child in its mother's arms. Good and bad are largely relative terms. The next few hours were among the happiest in life. The world, however, moves and our relations are ever shifting. Moon and tide wait upon no man's pleasure. It was about two A. M. I felt a moisture

beneath me, but when I remembered where I was, I did not think it strange, and rolled over to continue my dreams of home. Soon, however, I awoke to find the pockets and all the vacant and sinuous labyrinths of my regulation trousers filled with water. Deeming it prudent to make a reconnoissance, I found all the island about me flooded. I started instinctively in the direction of the battery, forgetting that a ditch had been begun there until I landed at the bottom of it up to my neck in water.

The early hours of February twenty-second were passed, not as had been our custom in former years, in preparing to honor the Father of his Country, but in frantic endeavors to avoid the alligators which were out for their early morning exercise. If what I say in this connection may seem incredible, please call up my comrades to verify it. The layer of mud on these islands was the regular habitation of this amphibious tribe, and it will show the nature of the mud if I tell you that when the tide went out they sank easily right down out of sight, and the firing of the guns often brought them to the surface. We discovered the nose of one of these

carnivorous reptiles near the cook's kettle, and digging about him we lassoed him and drew him out with hawsers. He measured about ten feet, and the boys have not forgotten what tender steaks he made, as this kind of meat was at a premium for a few days. The high winds and strong tides due to the storm, as also the renewed vigilance of the enemy prevented us getting supplies via Mud River across the Savannah, and we were compelled to subsist on native products and faith. The boys drew the line, however, at alligators, and refused to prolong life by eating the snakes that abounded. I always thought this distinction was not so much a matter of taste as of prejudice inherited from our distinguished ancestress. Captain Bailey succeeded later in conquering a prehistoric crocodile which measured fourteen feet and proved a trifle ancient for our digestive apparatus even under such stimulating circumstances.

Reduced to extremities we sent a boat to Mud River to report our distress and to bring immediate relief. The next night we stood waiting, cold and hungry, at the water's edge, peering with dilated pupils into the impenetrable darkness and

listening with ears acute to catch the dip of the muffled oars, for our comrades were true and we knew they would attempt the passage that night, even were all Tatnall's fleet in the river. Slowly the hours passed and midnight came and went. Only hollow tones of the distant breakers give answer to our longing. Most of the men have fallen in the mud, asleep. A few of us stand shivering still, and on the flood of the tide, ere we are aware of its approach, a boat is rowed right up on to the island into our midst. The men are aroused, and half crazy they rush for the boat. The provisions brought are soon distributed. What is it? Could you have looked upon it and have witnessed the scene that followed, it would give you a more vivid conception of what the Union soldiers was called upon to suffer in that long, terrible war than any painting of words can portray. When shipped from the North, it was supposed to be a barrel of yellow meal, presumably for horses. That was all. It had evidently been thrown out into the surf at Port Royal and towed ashore months before, and had since been floating around

the mud rivers on flats in the rain, who could tell how long. It was green with mould and cobweby, but now fully alive to its important mission. We broke it up with our shovels, regardless of the sacrifice of life it cost, and each man received a piece — a piece? no, that is too nice a word, a chunk,—a hunk, that fits the case better. What could we do with it, you ask? Trust a hungry soldier for that. A stampede was made for the old barrel into which we had thrown pork rinds, skim-mings and superfluous grease. This we mixed with our *shorts*, and adding a sufficient quantity of the brackish river water, we reduced the mass to a paste, and the small hours of the night were spent around the fire, each with his little tin pan in which he turned from time to time his Johnny cake until it was baked to a crisp brown. *That that was a genuine* "CAMP FIRE," of which those who have seen only the simulated ones of these degenerate days, consisting of scalloped oysters, ice cream and horticultural rhetoric, can form but an indistinct conception.

Since then it has been my privilege to sit at rich

banquets in many of the great capitals of the world, but I am unable to recall one which I enjoyed with such a keen relish as I did that brown Johnny cake seated with my comrades in Bird Island mud. Surely happiness is largely a relative state. The water we drank was from the river, of which we had our choice, either at high tide when it was fresh from the Atlantic and about as palatable as a dose of Epsom salts, or at low tide when charged with all the mud of the swollen creeks above, a choice as difficult as the one imposed upon the renowned Mr. Hobson. We had no change of clothing, or none to speak of, and as it was well nigh impossible to wash what we had on in the heavily impregnated water, our condition may be more easily imagined than admired. It was equally impossible to make any satisfactory impression upon the successive deposits which had become encrusted upon our bodies. Indeed, it became rather a matter of pride to carry these evidences of our heroic service as one does honorable scars, and he who succeeded in removing them was looked upon

much as a dude is in our day. Thus ever does our environment determine largely our fashions.

One of our gravest discomforts was the various kinds of animal life that insisted on sharing the island with us. There was one animal who had come with us, landed with us, stayed with us, sticking closer than a brother; a wingless, hemipterous animal known to scientists as the *pediculus vestimenti*, better known to soldiers as "*the gray back*." You can form an idea of the sufferings from cold and hunger, from sickness and wounds, but you cannot gain any adequate estimate of a soldier's sufferings if you leave out of account this sturdy camp follower. Where it is possible to boil one's clothes, the encroachments of this pest may be warded off, but on a campaign, such as this, it is simply out of the question, and no one, from the commanding general down, is exempt. It is only a question of degrees of multiplicity. Herod as well as Phillip II. of Spain, died from the attacks of these ridiculous *pediculi*. Most of my comrades were in a condition to envy the happy lot of those two royal sufferers. Among all the tortures we

were called upon to endure in this siege, none were more aggravating than the insistent incursions of this pest. As we had no kettle in which to boil our clothes except the cook's, who stubbornly refused to loan them for the purpose, and as washing them in cold water seemed only to invigorate the robust constitution of their tenacious tenants, the only recourse left us was, as it was euphemistically called in the army, to "*go skirmishing*," and this pleasant duty became one of the chief recreations during our stay on Bird Island.

CONCLUSION.

Such, ladies and gentlemen, were *some* of the experiences through which those passed to whom was entrusted the investment of Fort Pulaski. In conclusion I desire to call your attention to one important lesson to be drawn from a siege such as I have endeavored to describe. Many persons fancy that the only important duty of a soldier consists in fighting on the open battle-field. Such persons estimate the service of a regiment by the number of great battles in which it was engaged and the

number of men it lost therein; and they estimate the service of any given individual by the number of times he has been killed, or at least mortally wounded. How often have you, my comrade, been asked by such persons: Were you at Gettysburg? No! At Fredericksburg? No! At Vicksburg? No! At Charleston? No! Ever killed? No! Wounded? No! An ordinary soldier has no show in the hands of these unread torturers. They never heard of other battles, and conclude at once that *he* could not have seen much service. There are two palpable fallacies involved in such estimates to which I wish to draw your attention. In the first place, many a man was present at more than one of the great battles mentioned, and yet saw no more severe fighting than another man possibly present at no one of them. We remember that many a regiment marched up the peninsula and marched down again without firing a shot, while some of us remember that one detachment of our Battery was at Gainesville, where the fighting was so desperate and decisive, and finally hand to hand, that the gun, limber, caisson and horses were all lost, and twelve

out of fifteen men either cut down or landed in Andersonville. Few regiments at Fredericksburg saw such fighting as the First Cavalry at Kelley's Ford, a mere reconnoissance. The fact is, many are here present who have been in battles where from fifty to one hundred thousand were engaged, who, however, were called upon to perform more arduous, more desperate work, on other fields seldom mentioned by name, where but a few hundred were engaged.

These statements every soldier here readily admits, but the one I am now about to make may seem at first untenable, to wit: *the most dangerous service was not rendered on the field of battle at all*. Let us glance at the statistics of the war :

Killed in battle.....	44,238
Died of wounds.....	49,205
Total.....	93,443
Died of disease in the service.....	212,384
Discharged for disability.....	285,245
Total.....	497,629
Discharged because of wounds, subtracted.....	65,455
Remainder.....	432,174

What do these figures mean? They mean :

1. That more than *twice* as many died of disease in the service as were killed in action and died of wounds combined.

2. That nearly *five* times as many died of disease as were killed in action.

3. That *five* times as many were discharged for disability, excluding those discharged because of wounds, as were killed in action.

4. That more than *five* times as many died of disease and were discharged for disability combined, as were killed in action and died of wounds combined.

In some departments these ratios are increased to an appalling degree. One regiment from this State serving in the department of the Gulf, lost *thirty-six* times as many by disease as were killed in battle, and another *one hundred and nine* times as many. Large as was the percentage of mortality in our late war, yet it was larger in former wars when sanitary provisions were less understood. In the Crimean War seven-eighths (87.5 per cent.) of the mortality among the British troops was from disease. When you think of the historic names of

the Alma and Inkerman, of Balaclava and Sebastopol and many lesser fields, remember that only *one-eighth* of the mortality in that entire war resulted from death on the field of action and from wounds combined. To show the rate of mortality in relation to the number in the field, we may take the report of Lord Raglan (see Kinglake, vol. iv, p. 158) for the seven months from October 1, 1854, to April 30, 1855. The mean strength of his army was 28,939. Of this number there died in hospital 11,652, of whom 10,053 died of disease. The report made on the last day of February, covering the preceding four months (see K., p. 150) shows 8,898 deaths in hospital, 13,608 lying in hospital on date of report, making a deduction of 22,506 from an army whose mean strength for that month was only 30,919; and a large proportion of those still able to handle a fire-lock were suffering from grave bodily ailment (p. 152). The rate of mortality in January, which was the greatest, was so large that to supply the loss from disease alone, which was *ninety-seven* per cent. of the whole, the entire army would have to be replaced by a new one every ten

months. It was only by constant reinforcements that either the English or French army was saved from extinction.

Such facts and figures as these are significant to veteran soldiers, as indicative of the kind of service that was required of the Union volunteer, as indicative of the kind of service most dangerous to life in war. showing that it is not necessarily participation in great battles, not necessarily direct exposure of life and limb amid shot and shell, though every genuine volunteer hailed such opportunities as a relief, not this alone that constitutes real service and heroic self-sacrifice, but rather the long and faithful performance of the manifold duties the soldier is called upon daily and nightly to render, in camp, on picket, in siege, in the trenches, on the march; illy-clad, illy-fed, and exposed to all the rigor and vicissitudes of the elements. If you will show me the comrade who faithfully, loyally, with glad obedience performed all these, who for the sake of his country endured all this, I will show you the comrade who was not only the man most to be relied upon when the critical hour of

battle came, but also the man who rendered to his country the best service, the most arduous service, yea, the most *dangerous* service, and who to-day, though he carry no hostile bullet in his body, yet deserves the deepest gratitude and highest rewards of this Republic.

So when I recall the eventful history of the glorious old "Third," and remember the bloody fields on which it proved its valor and heroism, James Island, Pocotaligo, Deveau Neck, Port Royal Ferry, Coosaw River, Broad River, Bluffton, Honey Hill, Gainesville, Olustee, Cedar Creek, Morris Island, Wagner, Pulaski, Drury's Bluff, Fort Burnham, Laurel Hill, Petersburg, Appomattox and more than a score of others; when I think of the long months spent in the siege of Sumter and Charleston, where it was under fire as many days and nights as any regiment in the whole war, I would not, I cannot detract from the honor gained in the heat and danger of actual battle, but I cannot forget that she performed other services no less honorable, no less dangerous. When I recall the *thirty* hours during which she withstood the withering fire

from Pulaski, I recall no less vividly the three long months, the more than two thousand hours, spent in equally arduous, and even more dangerous duties while drawing the fatal cordon about that citadel.

So when I read over the old roster of my regiment and check off the long list of those who died of *disease* in the service, I think of the swamps and savannas of Georgia. When I read the two HUNDRED AND FIFTY-THREE names of those who were discharged because they were no longer fit for service, I think on the swamps and malaria of Georgia. When I place the fatal star opposite the names of so many who since then have surrendered, my mind reverts to the islands of Carolina and Georgia. When, as again and again, I go these bitter winter days to my door and find there a bent and broken form, which five and twenty years ago stood by my side as proud and erect as any that walks God's earth, and my sometime comrade tells me how manfully he has struggled all these intervening years to keep himself and the wife of his youth and their children from the poor-house; tells me how at length, nearly blind and

deaf and crushed in spirit, he has been again discharged by his employer as no longer fit for service, and adds that he dare not tell it to any except an old comrade, nor apply to the country to which he freely gave his all to save, lest the very people he so gladly served, if not perchance the highest officials of the land, may call him a pauper, a fraud, the scum of the earth, then, then again I think on the islands and marshes of the Savannah, and turn back once again to reflect upon the great problem of life, and to imbibe from the trials and sufferings of those heroic years, courage and strength to endure the still more bitter pangs that come with these ungenerous days.

